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The Life of a Lawyer: written by himself, 1 Vol. 8vo. Saunders and Benning. London, 1830.

THIS is a pleasing, light production. It professes to delineate the life of the writer, as he rose from one of the lowest ranks of life, by the patient and honorable exercise of industry and talents, to the highest station at the English bar. Though there is nothing in it of those wonderful transitions of fortune, to which romance owes so much of its interest, the patient progress of industry towards the attainment of the one object of its earliest ambition, is here traced out in a manner so vivid, so natural, and so unaffected, as imperceptibly to draw the reader along with it, to lead him into the details, and to imbue him with the spirit and feelings that have elicited their narration.

The writer states, that even when a child, he was seized with an irresistible ambition to become a lawyer. "An event now happened which made the first great impression on my mind. This was the assize week at Winchester. How well I remember all connected with it! The procession to meet the judges, their solemn entry, and the pomp of opening the commission, all sunk deep in my mind. I watched every person about the court; the faces of the very trumpeters and javelin-men, were eagerly gazed on and examined; it was my greatest pleasure to meet any of the barristers strolling about town, in which case I invariably took off my cap, and, if I received any recognition in return, I was happy for the rest of the day."

He then becomes servant, and afterwards clerk to a country attorney, where he was occupied from morning to night, working in the office at least twelve hours in the day; "but even here, I was not without my enjoyments. Perhaps, one of my greatest, at this time, was when I was entrusted, at assize times, with a brief to deliver to counsel, and sometimes with the fee marked upon it. I had great delight in seeing the benign and gracious air assumed by the barrister, to whom I was thus commissioned, when I unfolded the nature of my message, and I felt gratified by the condescension with which he would often talk to me about the matter."

This is the natural developement of a character, formed to wind its way tranquilly, yet surely, through the mazes of a tortuous world. The writer proceeds in the same simple, yet interesting tone, to inform us how he rose from step to step, till he became fixed as a first rate chancery practitioner.

With the narration of his forensic life, is interwoven a tale of love, this also has the same merit as the other, the history of his heart is similar to that of his head. The manner in which he develops the progress of his affections, is strictly in keeping with that of his worldly pursuits. It is quiet yet not tame, spirited yet not enthusiastic. "I had always looked forward to marriage, as the happiest condition of this life. It appeared to me the state where all the energies of the mind should flourish in the greatest vigour, as they would then be concentrated to obtain one object, and would be less likely to be diverted or weakened." He accidentally becomes acquainted with a young lady of large fortune, during her education at a boarding school; resists a temptation to hurry her into a secret marriage;

loses for a time her good opinion, through the machinations of the person whose evil suggestions he had the manliness to reject; succeeds in procuring a satisfactory *claircissement*; and, at the end of ten years, is united to the object of his first affection. "It may be permitted," he thus writes when speaking of his marriage, "to a fond and affectionate husband to say, that although I have endured many severe struggles in life after my marriage, my domestic happiness has never been disturbed for a day, and that I have ever found a refuge from the troubles and dis gusts of the world, in the bosom of my own family."

The severe struggles of which he here speaks, arose from the new character he assumed, after having attained the primary object of his ambition, that of a first rate lawyer. He became a politician, and rose, step by step, from the primary grade of Solicitor General, to that of Lord Chancellor of England. We cannot, however, give the same meed of unmixed approbation to this part of the narrative, that has been justly drawn from us by the preceding. We are now presented with a number of personages all well known in the living chronicles of our own time, to whom actions and motives and lines of conduct are attributed, of which we can trace nothing whatsoever in the page of history. We acknowledge that writers of fiction have a right to introduce historic characters, as acting and speaking in such a manner as we conceive they might have done, thought we have reason to believe they did not so act, or speak; but this kind of illusion has its due bounds, which cannot be transgressed without destroying all the appearance of probability to which it owes its attraction. When we read of a king, or a chancellor, or a prime minister, pursuing a course of action as to which history is silent, yet not inconsistent with what we there read, we are willing to acquiesce in the delusion; but when we are gravely told of great political events as occurring under our own eyes, which we know never occurred; of changes of ministry, which we are convinced never took place—of an attorney-general making acts of parliament which never were enacted—of a chancellor advocating a great political change in opposition to the positive declaration of a king, which change, and advocacy, and opposition, we are equally convinced, not only had no existence, but is contradictory to every annual register and magazine, and newspaper, we have met with: this is monstrous—it is not an illusion—it is not even a caricature, it can only be compared to an attempt to cut up living beings, in order to make puppets of them, by a new and unnatural combination of their limbs and members: yet this the writer has attempted, and we pronounce his attempt, a complete failure. Our readers are acquainted with the old jest of the strolling company, performing the play of Hamlet, in which, by particular desire, the character of Hamlet was omitted. This is bad enough: but here we have two Hamlets running together, and jostling and distracting our imaginations by the incessant double. Our author makes himself chancellor of England: we immediately *try back* for all the chancellors during the reigns of all the Georges, to ascertain which of them the picture is intended to represent. We find, or fancy, a resemblance to some one of them, in some one particular: pleased with our own sagacity in the discovery, we proceed to trace the likeness throughout,

when instantly we are dashed and disconcerted by the narration of some event, or some incident, which never can be made to apply. This, we say again, is monstrous.

We differ from the writer on another point: "These memoirs," says he in the concluding sentence of them, "appear to me not unlikely to convey to other persons, the illustration of the glorious truth, that in England the road to honour and distinction is open to all." Now, after a somewhat careful perusal of the contents of the volume, we have come to a conclusion diametrically opposite. The very circumstance, that the simple, unadorned, life of a lawyer, rising from destitution to opulence and rank, excites sufficient interest to render it the basis of an entertaining volume, proves that such an event is very uncommon. We do not write tales of every-day occurrences.—There is also internal evidence in the book itself, in the author's own account of his own life, to shew the contrary to be the fact. The part to which we allude is, that in which he applies to the then chancellor, to be appointed one of the king's counsel. The circumstance is well told by the author, and we shall give it in his own words:

"In this mode of life, in constant and daily employment, I remained about a year, and I was then advised to apply for a silk gown, (the badge of a king's counsel.) This I thought, indeed, I was fully entitled to, being now in as good business as any junior at the Chancery bar. I had been able, also, to lead causes successfully on the circuit, and had succeeded in the Bertie case, already detailed. I was now also considered of sufficient standing; I therefore determined to apply to the lord chancellor, from whom all legal honors flowed."

"I had always been treated very civilly, by Lord Haverford, although personally I knew nothing of him. I wrote to him accordingly, stating that my business was now increasing, and that many of my friends were desirous that I should become a leader in the court, and requested the honour of being appointed one of his majesty's counsel."

"I received no answer to my letter for a week, and I was then in doubt whether I should renew my application, or consider the lord chancellor's silence as a refusal of my request. I did not know, at that time, that that noble lord very rarely answered any letter."

"I resolved to see the lord chancellor on the subject, and consequently on his leaving court one day, I sent in a message to him requesting the favour of a minute's interview. The lord chancellor sent to me, to say he would see me in his private room in a few moments."

"On entering I said to him that I felt anxious about a request I had made to his lordship, and that had induced me to trouble him. 'Pray, Mr. Eagle,' he said, 'look at that letter; I, for one, do not believe it; but, pray, is it true?' It was an anonymous letter, to the following effect:—'My Lord,—Understanding that Mr. Eagle has made an application to you for a silk gown, I think it my duty to acquaint you, that he was once a conveyancer's clerk, and even lower than that. This I assure your lordship is true, and will hardly be denied by himself, though I cannot now give my name.' Of course I felt very much surprised and hurt."

"Now that letter, I hope," said Lord Haverford, "is not true." "My Lord," I replied, "that letter, so far as it alleges I was a con-

veyancer's clerk, is certainly true; but as to my being *lower than that*, I deny it, nor do I know to what it alludes. I have gained my present situation by my own exertions, and—

"Mr. Eagle," interrupted his lordship, "if you have indeed been a conveyancer's clerk, I do not think it consistent with my duty to the profession, to advise his Majesty to appoint you one of his counsel."

"My Lord," I cried with some warmth, "I should have hoped my former humble situation would have rather been in my favour."—"I have given you my sentiments, sir," said the chancellor, with a dignity approaching to haughtiness, and in a tone which I saw was intended to conclude all argument. I therefore left the room, saying only, on leaving, that I felt it my duty to submit to the chancellor's pleasure.

"My mortification and distress were of course very great. I was refused, and refused on grounds which I could not remove. Was my birth and its consequences, to be an eternal bar to my advancement? However, I was consoled by the reflection, that my only reproach was my obscure origin; and that my want of success in my application was in no manner owing to myself."

The writer then proceeds to inform us, that he was shortly afterwards appointed to the situation from which he had been so wantonly and unjustly excluded. But how? Not by any exertion of those talents by which he would lead us to suppose *the road to honour and distinction is open to all*, but in consequence of a change in the ministry, by which some of his friends came into office. Had the same chancellor continued to preside over the distribution of official prizes, the plebeian advocate would never have risen above the bar, and the life of a lawyer would never have appeared.—History shews that so far from England being pre-eminently the country in which the road to honour and distinction is open to all, the most despotic governments exhibit the same sudden and unexpected elevations from obscurity to the height of rank; and, generally speaking, the more frequent and rapid in the most despotic.

This difference of opinion as to the inference to be drawn from the life before us, detracts, however, in no manner from the merits of the work itself. It is a point on which differences of opinion will and must exist.—With the exception of the absurd, and we must say unnecessary amalgamation of historic falsehood with imaginative realities, and to the exclusion also of some speeches in parliament arising thereout, we think the work entitled to much praise, and tending strongly to promote what we conceive to have been the author's main object in its composition: the excitement of honourable ambition in young men born and educated in the lower classes of society.

Travels in Kamtchatka and Siberia; with a Narrative of a Residence in China. By Peter Dobell, Counsellor of the Court of His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Russia. 2 vols.—London, Colburn and Bentley. 1830.

SECOND NOTICE.

AFTER a fatiguing and perilous route through the country of the Tongusees, Mr. Dobell at length reaches Ochotsk, where he is obliged

to sojourn a fortnight in order to recruit his health and strength. Ochotsk is not a large town, but one of great importance from its situation on the sea of that name; it is, however, but ill adapted for a naval arsenal, in consequence of the badness of its harbour.

On the road to Yakutsk he falls in with a colony of Siberian exiles.

"After passing to the opposite side of the river Aldan, we found there an establishment similar to that on the Ochotsk side, where likewise there are a number of joutas, and where post-horses are stationed. Behind a large body of meadows, on the declivity of a hill, exposed to the south, we saw several joutas beautifully situated, and, on inquiry, I was informed they contained a colony of banished men, sent thither by order of the Government. They appeared very well off, having comfortable dwellings, cattle, &c. They certainly had few luxuries; but, with common industry, living on the banks of a river abounding with fish and game, and where there was good soil and fine pastures, they could never want for the necessaries of life unless too indolent to procure them. Those people call themselves Possessencies, or colonists, and are styled in Siberia, Neshchastnie Loodie, or unfortunate people; no banished man, though he be a convict of the description, being ever called in that country by a name that can wound his feelings so as to remind him of crimes for which he is already supposed to have been punished, or degrade him in the opinion of the public. This shews not only very sound policy but a proper delicacy of the Governors towards the feelings of these poor people; a delicacy highly commendable, as, by throwing a veil over their past crimes, they not only make them forget what they have been, but induce them to emulate the very many examples before them of retrieved criminals, who have become honest, industrious, good subjects.

"Banishment to such a country as Siberia, then, is certainly no such terrible infliction, except to a Russian, who, perhaps of all beings upon earth, possesses the strongest attachment to the soil on which he grows—taking root like the trees that surround him, and pining when transplanted to another spot, even though it should be to a neighbouring province, better than his own. Too much praise cannot be bestowed on the humane system adopted by the Russian Government in saving the lives of criminals without distinction, and transporting them to Siberia, to augment the population of a fine country much in want of inhabitants, where their morals are strictly watched, and where they soon become useful, good people."

"Having seen the good effects of the penal code of Russia, what I say on the subject is no more than what truth and justice demand; and I wish for humanity's sake that so bright an example, which sheds a ray of unsullied glory on her sovereigns, may be followed with equal success by every nation of the earth."

It is with much pleasure we add the following passages, putting beyond all doubt the progress of agriculture in those hitherto unprofitable and barren regions:

* In Siberia there are certainly instances where convicts have again committed crimes, and some of them murder; these are confined to the mines for life. There are, however, but few examples of this sort; the majority of the convicts acquiring habits of industry and good conduct superior to the same class of people in Russia.

"In the autumn of 1813, the first time I travelled along the banks of the Lena, I found that agriculture had advanced no farther than Olekma, six hundred versts above Yakutsk. But at my return in the spring of 1818, it had already begun to advance, and in the summer of 1827, when I again mounted against the stream of the Lena, in my journey from Manilla and Kamtchatka to St. Petersburg, I found grain cultivated even in the environs of Yakutsk, and on the banks of the river Amga between Yakutsk and Ochotsk! At the latter place there is a settlement of Russian peasants, who till the ground; and they say it is extremely fertile. Barley and spring-rye, called in Russian yaritsa, are the two grains which succeed best in those new settlements. The crops along the Lena were at first often destroyed by mildew and hoar frost, because the country being mountainous, the inhabitants erroneously thought the grain would succeed better in the valleys and low grounds. They have, however, at length discovered their mistake; and the traveller now sees fine fields of grain on the sides of the mountains, where they often prosper, while those below are injured. Even the Yakuts along the Lena, and on the numerous large islands which divide that fine stream, have taken seriously to agriculture; so that, in spite of the little encouragement received from the local Government, the natives having now found their account in the labours of the field, there is every reason to conclude these will spread over the province.

"I was not a little astonished to see, in 1827, the amazing progress population and agriculture had made, during an absence of ten years, between Katchuk and Irkutsk. From a hill, after passing a station called Judofsky, one has a fine prospect of the surrounding country, laid out in corn fields, and interspersed with villages, farms, &c. One of those villages, which we passed through, called Oiyuk, had then a couple of churches, and upwards of two hundred houses, but is now quite a town."

Upon departing from Irkutsk, our traveller passes rapidly through Tomsk and Tobolsk—the former containing about 10,000, the latter 30,000 inhabitants—and having reached the frontier of Russia in Europe, closes this part of his narrative with some general reflections on the greatness of the empire of the Autocrat.

The *Residence in China* is a narrative founded on the author's personal observation at three distinct periods. His first visit to the land of tea was in 1798—his second in 1803—and his last in 1820. On the second occasion he resided in Canton for seven years. He never got admission to the interior of the country beyond the confines of Canton; but, with such opportunities as he did enjoy, he is enabled to supply us with many interesting particulars.

On entering Macao roads, the ship which carried Mr. Dobell, on his first visit, was boarded by a *comprador* and his party. This is a sort of higher order of *commissionaire* or factor.

"He, and several servants who accompanied him, wishing to hire themselves, were dressed in long gowns of silk, and white and blue Nankin; but their appearance was so effeminate I could not help imagining myself surrounded by women. The construction of their boats, after the manner of the country, roused